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ON THE DEATH AND TRANSFIGURATION OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING

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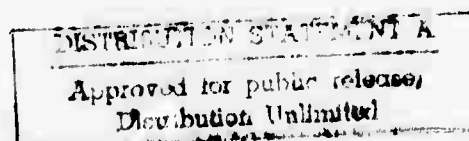
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Abstract

This paper presents a new interpretation of leadership experience and leadership training in an effort to explain why the literature reports no consistent relations between these methods of leadership development and organizational performance. The basis for the reconceptualization is derived from the Contingency Model which postulates a contingent relationship between leadership motivation as measured by the LPC score and the favorableness of the leader's situation (i.e., the degree to which the situation enables the leader to control and influence the group.) According to the model, task-motivated (low LPC) leaders perform better in favorable or unfavorable situations while relationship-motivated leaders perform better in intermediate situations. Let us now interpret leadership experience or training as improving situational favorableness by making the task more structured and by improving the leader-member relations. It then follows that the same type of training will be beneficial for one type of leader but detrimental for another. This hypothesis is tested in a variety of situations and supports the hypothesis of the Contingency Model.

ON THE DEATH AND TRANSFIGURATION
OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING¹

Fred E. Fiedler
University of Washington

This paper tests the hypothesis derived from the Contingency Model that experience and training differentially affect the performance of relationship- and task-motivated leaders. It thus hopes to resolve the puzzling and frustrating findings which indicate that leadership experience and training do not seem to increase organizational effectiveness. Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, and Weick (1970) recently reviewed the management training literature. The authors found numerous studies relating training to "internal criteria" of managerial attitudes and perceptions. However, only eight investigations used a control group as well as "external criteria" of organizational performance, i.e., criteria based on the supervisor's changes in job performance. This review led Campbell et al. to conclude that changes in managers' attitudes and perceptions have been observed as a result of training, however, "...with regard to the bulk of the literature on training effects, it remains to be demonstrated whether the changes in criteria used to measure training effects have any importance for the organizations goals (p. 325)." Others (e.g., House, 1967; Odiorne, 1964; Fleishman, 1953; Fleishman, Harris, and Burt, 1955) have come to essentially similar conclusions.

To the studies cited by Campbell, et al., should be added two experiments which compared trained and untrained leaders under controlled experimental conditions, and two correlational studies relating amount of training to organizational performance.

The first experiment (Fiedler, 1966) was conducted in cooperation with the Belgian naval forces. It compared, among other things, 48 three-man teams led by recruit leaders with 48 three-man teams led by petty officers who had graduated from a two year petty-officer candidate school and had an average of 10 years of leadership experience. The groups were matched on intelligence and other relevant variables. They were given four tasks of (a) writing a recruiting letter, (b) routing a ship convoy through 10, and (c) through 12 ports, and (d) nonverbally teaching men how to disassemble and reassemble a .45 caliber pistol. The median intercorrelation among these four tasks for 96 groups was .14. On not one of these tasks did teams led by trained and experienced petty officers perform significantly or substantially better than those led by inexperienced recruits.

A subsequent validation study conducted at a Canadian military academy (Fiedler and Chemers, 1968) compared three-man teams led by recently inducted enlisted men and by officers who had four years of leadership and managerial training at a military academy. The officers were highly regarded captains and majors with 5 to 17 years of military experience. The tasks consisted of (a) writing a fable, (b) routing a ship convoy, and (c) drawing bar graphs from score distributions which had to be converted from one scale to another. Here again, the teams led by officers and by trainees did not differ in their performance.

A study by Nealey and Fiedler (1968) correlated the rated performance of 171 post office supervisors and managers at various levels with the number of days of training they had received. These correlations were .04, -.001, and -.128 for post office technical training, regional technical

training, and leadership training. Finally, in an unpublished study of 16 police patrol sergeants, the correlations between amount of training and rated effectiveness were again essentially zero.

Experience is probably the most important type of training most supervisors get. However, a survey of the literature located no reported research which related leadership experience to organizational performance.

A review of data obtained in studies by my associates and myself was recently published (Fiedler, 1970a). In addition to comparing trained and untrained groups, the relations between years of leader experience and his group's performance were obtained in the Belgian and Canadian studies mentioned above. Other data came from teams of research chemists, from post offices, craftshop foremen, meat and grocery markets, and a machinery plant. In all, data were available for 385 managers and supervisors from 12 different sets of groups and organizations. The correlations between supervisory experience and performance ranged from .33 to $-.53$, with a median of $-.12$. (Only the correlation of $-.53$ was significant.) Subsequent analyses of other data (McNamara, 1968; Godfrey, Fiedler, and Hall, 1959, etc.) further supported these findings.

Schein and Bennis (1965), Campbell, et al., (1970), as well as others, have pointed out, however, that leadership training of various types does bring about some changes in behavior. Why then does training or experience typically fail to result in better performance? (See, for example, Campbell, et al., 1970; Morse and Reimer, 1956; House, 1967; Underwood, 1965). The Contingency Model, a recent theory of leadership effectiveness, suggests some answers to this important question.

Experience, Training, and the Contingency Model

This theory postulates that the group's or organization's performance is contingent upon two interacting variables. These are (a) the degree to which the leader is basically motivated to relate to members of his group or to achieve task success, and (b) the degree to which the leadership situation is favorable, i.e., to which it enables the leader to exert power and influence.

The Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) score which is our measure of leadership motivation is obtained by asking the individual to think of all those with whom he has ever worked, and then, to describe the one person with whom he could work least well. Although the score has been extensively used in recent years, it has been very difficult to interpret for reasons which are only now becoming clear. Our most recent interpretation of the Least Preferred Coworker score is that it is an index of a motivational hierarchy (Fiedler, 1970b). The individual with a high LPC score (who is basically relationship-motivated) has as his primary goal the attainment of close interpersonal relations. The individual with a low LPC score (who is basically task-motivated) will seek to attain task-related goals. Only in unfavorable situations will the high LPC leaders manifest behavior concerned with relating to group members while the low LPC leaders will manifest behaviors concerned with the task. (See Fiedler, 1967). However, in very favorable situations in which the leader is accepted, in which he has position power, and in which the task is structured, he can "afford" to seek secondary goals since his primary goals are essentially secured. Here the high LPC leader seems to seek self-enhancement and prominence while the low LPC leader seeks pleasant interpersonal relations.

The situational favorableness dimension, indicating the degree of the leader's power and influence, was originally defined by determining the degree to which (a) the leader is, or feels, accepted by his group members, (b) the task is structured (programmed, clearly spelled out, etc.), and (c) the organization vests power in the leadership position (leader can hire and fire, reprimand, etc.). Dividing each of these sub-dimensions at the median on the basis of how many groups in the original analyses (Fiedler, 1964) fall into the upper and the lower half of the distribution, yielded an eight-celled category system. Groups in which the leader is accepted, the task is structured, and the leader has high position power represent a very favorable situation (e.g., a trusted manager of a department who tells his subordinates how to set up a room for a meeting.) A group in which a disliked chairman of a volunteer committee has the task of planning a new curriculum represents a very unfavorable situation. Other groups (accepted leader, low position power, high task structure, etc.) fall in between these two extremes. Although the scaling of situations on this basis was seen as a very rough make-shift, and it still is far from satisfactory, it has proved itself a useful method for analyzing leadership phenomena.

The theory postulates--and the bulk of validation evidence supports--that the task-motivated leader performs better in favorable and unfavorable situations while the relationship-motivated leader performs better in intermediately favorable situations. Both the relationship-motivated as well as the task-motivated leaders will, therefore, perform effectively provided they are placed in a situation which matches their leadership-motivation.

What, then, is the effect of training? We typically view training as a means for changing the man, that is, making him more flexible, more sensitive, insightful and knowledgeable about the job and the group's needs.

However, we can also look at experience as a means for making the leadership situation more favorable (McNamara, 1968). The same can, of course, be said about training.

The experienced and trained leader will have solutions for many situations which arise, be they for grievances, for problems in doing the job, for disciplining employees, or troubleshooting. The task will be more structured, more routine, and the leader will have more "expert power." The experienced and trained leader will also know and understand his men better and he will tend to have a better relationship with them. However, the Contingency Model predicts that improving the leader's situational favorableness will have mixed consequences on his performance. If the groups were of intermediate favorableness for untrained leaders, the experience and training should make the situation more favorable and, therefore, increase the performance of low LPC leaders but decrease the performance of high LPC leaders. If the group situation was unfavorable for untrained leaders, the more favorable situation resulting from experience and training will "move" the group into the intermediate favorableness zone; this will decrease the performance of low LPC leaders while it will increase that of high LPC leaders. Data relevant to this hypothesis, coming from a variety of sources, are here presented. (See Figure 1).

Empirical Evidence

We shall first consider a study on the effects of leadership experience by McNamara (1968) who originally suggested that experience might change situational favorableness.

Favorableness of the Situation			
	Very favorable	Intermediate favorable	Not favorable
Relationship-motivated leaders	Poor performance	Good performance	Poor performance
	←	←	
Task-motivated leaders	Good performance	Poor performance	Good performance
	←	←	

Figure 1

Arrows indicate the predicted effect of experience and training.

School Administrators. McNamara (1968) investigated the performance of principals in elementary and secondary schools. The organizational performance of elementary principals was rated by school superintendents and their staffs. The evaluation of secondary schools was based on objective educational attainment tests given to all students of secondary schools in the province of Alberta in the 11th grade.

McNamara correlated the years of the principals' experience with the performance criteria and found no significant relations. This finding fits the earlier mentioned results that leadership experience does not help performance. McNamara then divided his group of principals into those who had been in their position for more than three years--a more favorable situation--and those who had been less than two years on the job--a less favorable situation. The results are shown on Table 1.

An interpretation of these data is suggested by the Contingency Model. The elementary schools in McNamara's sample were very small (5 to 7 teachers) and they are relatively simple organizations which can be easily controlled. Hence, the leadership situation is likely to be very favorable for the established principals but only of intermediate favorableness for the new principals. We would, therefore, expect better performance from the task-motivated than the relationship-motivated principals.

The secondary schools are considerably more complex. The principal not only must deal with teenagers but he supervises 25 to 40 teachers who are assigned to various departments with their own department heads. Thus, the secondary school appears to be an intermediately favorable situation even for the established principal. It would be unfavorable for the newly appointed principal who is still trying to learn the ropes. Hence,

Table 1
Differences Between Elementary and Secondary Schools
in Effectiveness of Leadership Styles Over Time

	Newly-Appointed Principals (2-yrs)	Established Principals (3+yrs)
Elementary LPC(3) r EFF(3) ¹	35(51) [p<.01, two tail]	-25(77) [p<.05, two tail]
Secondary LPC rho ATT ²	-48(19) [p<.05, two tail]	45(45) [p<.01, two tail]

From Vincent David McNamara. The principal's personal leadership style, the school staff leadership situation, and school effectiveness. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Alberta, July, 1968.

¹EFF = Effectiveness ratings by superintendents

²ATT = Student attainment test scores

we would expect that the relationship-motivated principals will perform better if they have been on the job for several years; however, the task-motivated principals should perform better if they are new on the job.

Moreover, as the Contingency Model predicts, the experienced relationship-motivated principals of elementary schools were actually less effective than the newly appointed principals; they presumably became less effective over time as a result of becoming more experienced (see Figure 2a). In the secondary schools the inexperienced task-motivated principals were more effective than were those with experience. Here again, the leader who was "mismatched" on situational favorableness performed actually less well despite the fact that he had more experience (see Figure 2b).

Culture Training for Leaders. A study by Chemers (1969) demonstrates the differential effect of leadership training on the performance of task- and relationship-motivated leaders and again is interpretable on the basis of the Contingency Model. His experiment compared the interpersonal effectiveness of American team leaders in interacting with two Iranian members on experimentally designed group tasks. Half of the leaders were given an Iranian culture training program (see Fiedler, Mitchell, and Triandis, 1970) while the other American leaders were given a control program on Iranian physical geography. Half of the leaders were relationship-motivated (high LPC), half were task-motivated (low LPC).

The Culture Assimilator program was designed to assist Americans in establishing better relations with Iranians. It was assumed, therefore, that this type of leadership training would increase the members' satisfaction with the American leader and the group climate. The control program on physical geography was expected neither to assist nor to degrade

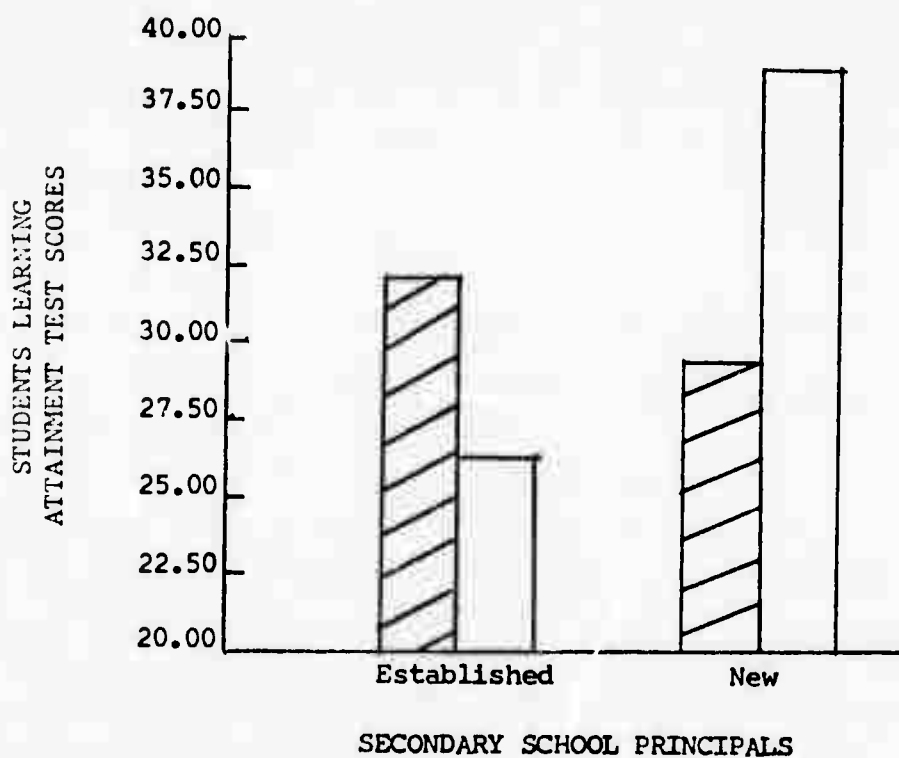
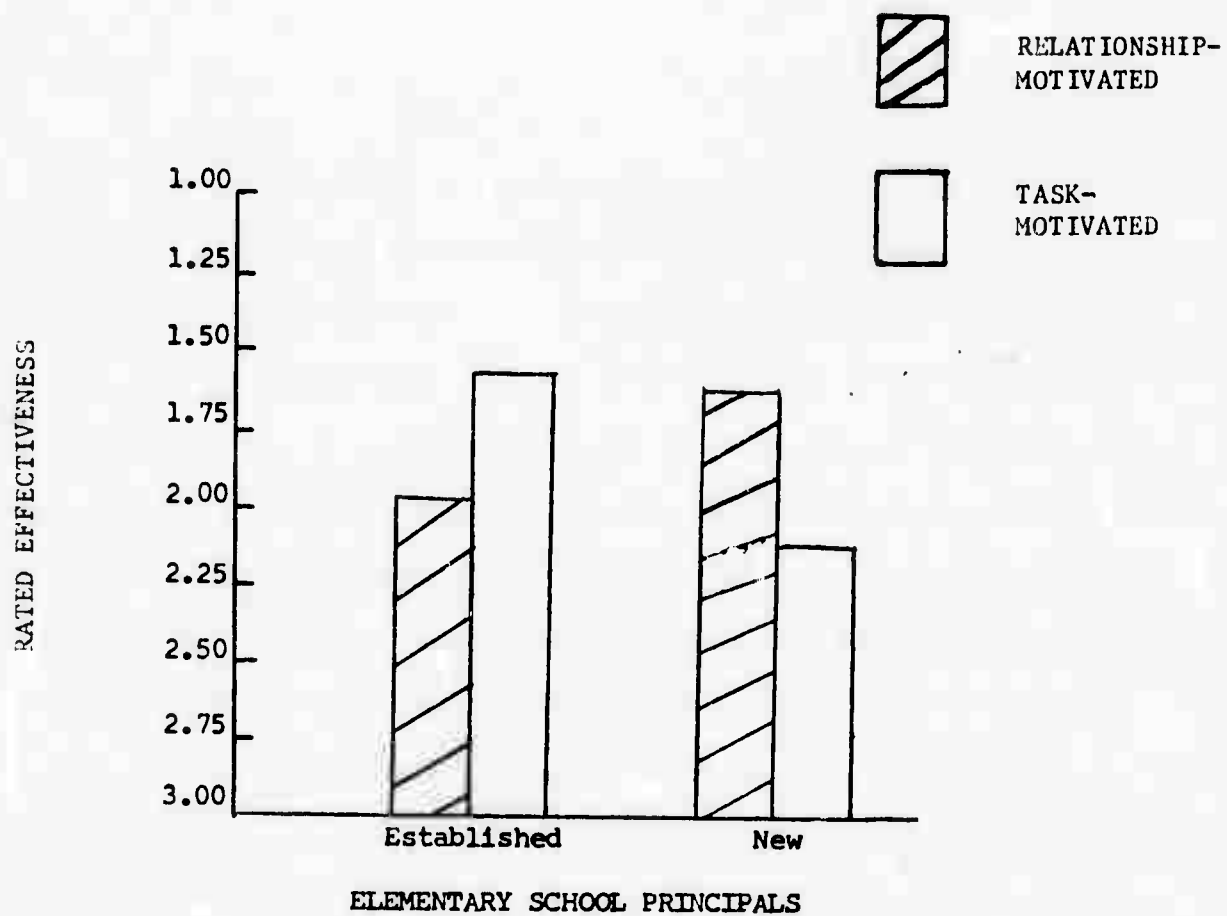


Figure 2

the group's interaction.

Chemers found no overall improvement in leader-member relations. However, if leadership training increases the favorableness of the situation, the culture-trained leaders should have a more favorable situation than the leaders trained with the geography program. The result should then be that the relationship-motivated leaders will perform less well, while the task-motivated leaders will perform better after culture training; there should be no difference between leaders who were trained in geography. As can be seen from Table 2, this was the case. Figure 3 shows the means of trained and untrained leaders.

As mentioned before, the McNamara and Chemers studies can be meaningfully interpreted on the basis of the Contingency Model. Specifically, the Model predicts that leadership experience and training affect performance of high and of low LPC leaders as follows:

Situational favorableness	Leader LPC	
	High	Low
Favorable	no effect or poorer	improved
Intermediate	improved	no effect or poorer
Unfavorable	no effect or poorer	improved

A specific test of the hypothesis must, of course, utilize independent data. These were obtained from previous studies.

Data from Other Studies

The Contingency Model, as well as the McNamara findings, lead to the expectation that the effect of experience and training will depend on the favorableness of the leadership situation. We cannot expect, therefore,

Table 2
INTERACTION OF TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP STYLE ON
SEVERAL MEASURES OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

Scale	Culture		Geography		F	p
	High LPC	Low LPC	High LPC	Low LPC		
Member Ratings of:						
Group Atmosphere	-.354	.118	.091	-.029	5.00	.05
Leader's Consideration Behavior	-.366	.342	.033	-.216	11.00	.01
Evaluation of Leader	-.403	.205	.037	-.001	6.73	.025
Climate: Liking for Situation	-.421	.231	.002	.017	6.27	.025

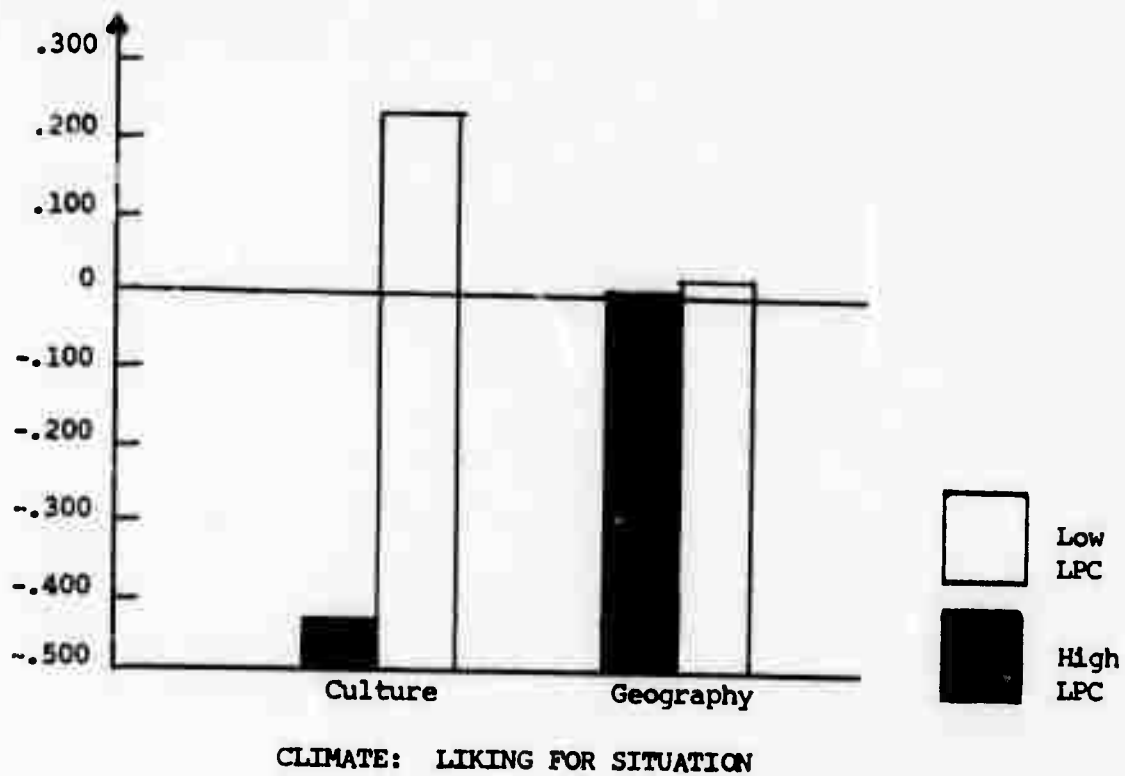
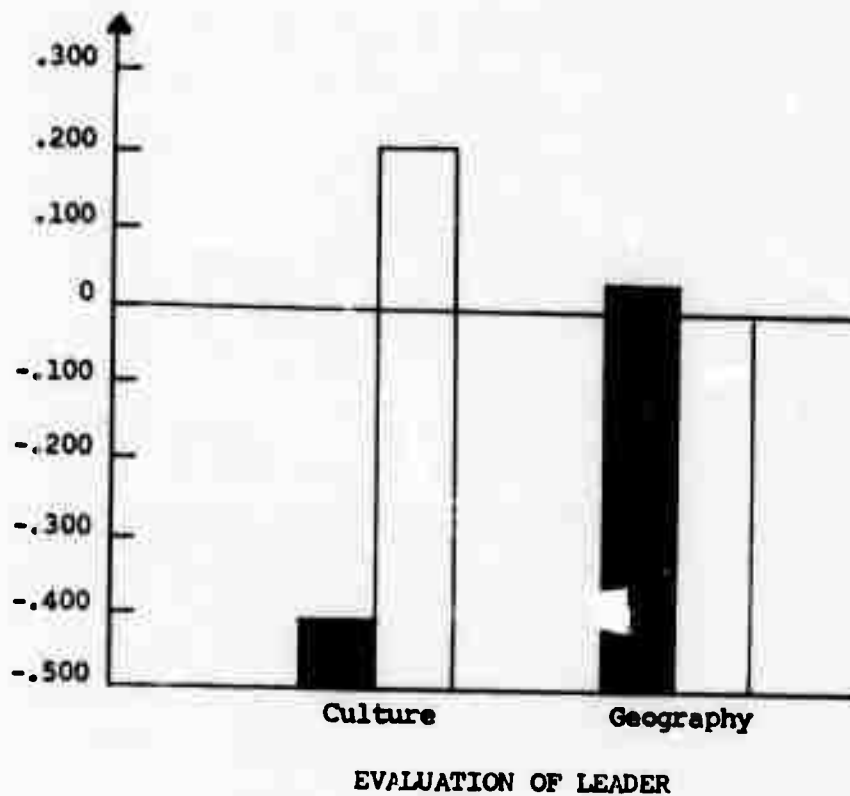


Figure 3

that the same relations between performance and experience or training will be found irrespective of the situational favorableness. For this reason, a simplified categorization of group situations has here been made. Groups or organizations were classified as constituting favorable, intermediate, or unfavorable situations, depending upon the structure of the task and the leader's position power. Groups with high task structure and high position power were classified as favorable, those with either low task structure or low position power as intermediate, and those with both, low task structure and low position power as unfavorable. The method of classification on the basis of these two factors follows the methods previously described (Fiedler, 1967).

Very Favorable Leadership Situations

1. General managers, Illinois Farm Supply Company (Godfrey, Fiedler, and Hall, 1959). This was a study of 32 small cooperatives selling farm supplies. The companies were members of a federation and had very similar operating procedures as well as organization. The general managers reported to an elected board which set policy. The management of the companies was relatively structured.

The main criteria of company performance consisted of the percent of net income as a proportion of total sales over a three year period, and the company's operating efficiency (overhead, salaries, etc. as a proportion of net income.) The sample was split into the upper third (11) and the lower third (11) on the LPC scale, and the years of the company manager's experience in the organization was correlated with performance as measured by net income. These correlations between

experience and the criterion were .03 for high LPC managers, and .47 for low LPC managers. The corresponding correlations for the net income criterion alone were -.14 and .16, and for the operating efficiency measure -.34 and .65 ($p < .02$).

2. Assistant postmasters and superintendents of mail. The highest career employee in post offices is the Assistant Postmaster who generally takes technical charge of post office operations. His position is generally high, and his task is relatively structured. The second highest career position is that of the Superintendent of Mails who is in charge of all mail handling and distribution. His position power is high and his task structured. Data were available for 10 assistant postmasters and 10 superintendents of mail from medium sized post offices in central Illinois.

The correlations here computed between hours of training and performance were -.80 and -.14 for high LPC and -.10 and .50 for low LPC assistant postmasters and superintendents of mail ($N's=5$). Combining these two groups for purposes of this analysis yielded correlations of -.33 and .18 for high and low managers, respectively ($N's=10$).

3. General foremen of mails. These are second level supervisors who direct mail processing in a large urban post office. The task of these foremen is highly structured, their position power is between intermediate and strong. While they cannot hire or fire, and while their ability to discipline and assign men is quite circumscribed by postal regulations, they are clearly seen by subordinates as having legitimate power to assign tasks and to give directions. Each of the post office supervisors was rated by two to five of his superiors on a number of

scales which were intercorrelated and, therefore, combined. The correlations between experience in the post office and superiors' ratings were $-.29$ for high and $.38$ for low LPC foremen, in one post office ($N's=10$). Sufficient data could not be obtained from a second large post office.

5. Foremen of Mails. These are first level supervisors of various mail handling crews within the post office. Their jobs are highly structured, and their position power appears to range from intermediate to strong as is the case with general foremen. Correlations between years of post office experience and rated performance were $-.08$ and $.13$ for 43 high LPC and for 42 low LPC foremen in one post office, $-.13$ and $.40$ for 16 high and 16 low LPC foremen in another large post office, and $-.41$ and $-.02$ for 20 high and 21 low LPC foremen from 21 medium sized post offices.

Situations of Intermediate Favorableness

1. Police patrol sergeants. Patrol sergeants have high position power but fairly low task structure. Supervisory rankings were obtained for 15 sergeants of a county public safety department. The number of years of experience as well as the number of police training hours were obtained for each sergeant. The sample was divided into 7 high and 8 low LPC men, and their performance rankings were then correlated with amount of training and experience. The correlations between performance and training were $.84$ and $-.14$ for high and for low LPC sergeants respectively, while the corresponding correlations for amount of experience were $.58$ and $-.02$.

2. The most influential board members who are board presidents. Presidents of the board of directors, who were also sociometrically accepted by their board members, provided data in the study of 32 consumer

cooperative companies. The task of these boards basically consists of policy and decision making and is, therefore, clearly unstructured. The position power of the accepted board president is probably in the intermediate to high range. The criterion of performance was the same as that used for general managers of these companies, namely, the operating efficiency and net income of the companies over a three year period. These correlations between experience on the board and company net income were .57 for high LPC presidents and $-.28$ for low LPC presidents ($N's=8$).

Unfavorable Leadership Situations

1. Informal leaders of boards of directors who were not presidents. This set of groups consisted of company boards in which the informal leaders did not hold formal office as presidents. They, therefore, had low position power as well as unstructured tasks. Some of these men were past-presidents, some were secretary-treasurers, or vice presidents, some were merely board members who had earned the respect of their colleagues.

As in the analysis of board presidents, the criteria were net income of the companies in which these men held board membership. Their tenure on the board was correlated with these criteria. For high LPC board members, these correlations were $-.74$ and $.60$ for high and low LPC board members, respectively ($N's=7$).

Table 3 summarizes the data. The significance of the combined probabilities of these independent samples was computed by the method described by Gordon, Loveland, and Cureton (1952). As can be seen, four of the six sets of samples give a combined probability which is significant. One correlation in the unfavorable leadership situation is significant by itself.

The hypothesis based on the Contingency Model as well as on the McNamara

Table 3

13.1

Summary of Correlations Between Performance and

Experience or Training for Relationship- and Task-motivated Leaders

<u>Very Favorable Leadership Situation</u>		N ₁	N ₂	LPC	
				<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
1. General Managers, Farm Supply Co.	Exper. as GM	11	11	.03	.42
2. Assistant Postmasters and Supervisors of Mail	Trng.	10	10	-.33	.18
3. General Foreman of Mails (A)	Exper.	10	10	-.29	.38
4. Foreman of Mails (A)	Exper.	43	42	-.08	.13
5. Foreman of Mails (B)	Exper.	16	16	-.13	.40
6. Foreman of Mails (Ill.)	Exper.	20	21	-.41 ⁴	-.02
Median				-.21 ¹	.28 ²
<u>Intermediate Favorable Leadership Situation</u>					
1. Police patrol sergeants	Trng.	7	8	.84 ⁴	-.14
2. Most influential board members who are board presidents	Exper.	8	8	.40	-.28
Median				.62 ³	-.30
<u>Unfavorable Leadership Situation</u>					
1. Informal leaders of boards who are not presidents	Exper.	7	7	-.74 ⁴	.60

¹ Combined probability less than .05² Combined probability less than .01³ Combined probability less than .005⁴ p one tailed less than .05

and Chemers findings is, therefore, supported.

Discussion

The data listed on Table 3 show that high and low LPC leaders react differently to training and experience. The McNamara and Chemers studies, as well as the data from other studies here presented, show that the situational favorableness dimension plays a critical role in determining whether experience and training will be beneficial or detrimental to the manager or leader.

Most of the data are based on comparisons of the more or less highly experienced leaders. The similarity of the findings for training and for experience suggests, however, that these two aspects of the supervisor's background lead to similar, if not identical outcomes. Moreover, training and experience can reasonably be defined as conceptually similar.

While the results, viewed in toto, leave little doubt as to the significance of the effects, it should be emphasized that we have barely scratched the surface of the problem. The data which have been presented are relatively simple and most of the correlations are of relatively low magnitude. It must be remembered that we are dealing here with effects which are superimposed upon others. Specifically,

(a) Some managers for whom we have only experience data may have received considerably more training than others with the same amount of experience. Conversely, some for whom only training data are available may have had, in addition, considerable additional experience.

(b) The most important single dimension determining situational favorableness is the leader-member relationship as measured by sociometric or group atmosphere scores (See Fiedler, 1967). Also of importance are such

factors as the cultural or racial heterogeneity of the group, and the intelligence and motivational styles of the group members. Preliminary analyses suggest that these other aspects of the situational favorableness dimension also interact with training and experience since they affect the favorableness of the situation. The exact nature of these interactions still needs to be determined.

(c) Our classification of situational favorableness is rough at best and improved methods for measuring this dimension are likely to raise the level of prediction.

(d) The generalizability of the results here presented appears promising but is clearly not established. We do not know at this time the exact conditions under which our findings are applicable to a broader range of groups and organizations.

The findings have a number of important implications which should be made explicit:

1. The same type of leadership training and experience given to all supervisors increases the effectiveness of some and decreases the effectiveness of other managers.

2. While we can give different training to high and to low LPC leaders, this is likely to present problems. A more practical approach might be to reassign the supervisors or managers after training so that the high and the low LPC leaders will be placed in jobs in which the situational favorableness, after training, matches their leadership motivation pattern.

3. The model and the data indicate the desirability of rotational policies which take account of leadership motivation and situational favorableness. Maximal utilization of managerial manpower in McNamara's study would call for rotating after relatively few years the elementary school

principals with high LPC scores but frequent rotation of the secondary school principals with low LPC scores. The model also suggests the periodic assignment of certain trained managers (e.g., high LPC Assistant Postmasters) to more challenging and situationally less favorable positions than would be required for low LPC managers at this level.

To summarize, this paper has presented a reconceptualization of leadership training and experience in terms of their effect not on the leader but on the favorableness of the leadership situation. This new interpretation appears to throw important light on previous findings which indicated that experience and training of leaders did not systematically affect leadership performance. The fact that we obtained consistent albeit low to moderate correlations between performance and experience and training when managers were divided on the basis of their LPC scores (a) suggests that this reconceptualization of leadership training and experience is a fruitful avenue for intensive further research, and (b) provides strong support for the Contingency Model of leadership effectiveness which predicts these findings.

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Footnotes

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Figure Legends

- Figure 1. Effect of leadership experience and training on performance of relationship-motivated and task-motivated leaders. The arrows indicate that leadership experience and training change the favorableness of the leadership situation and, therefore, affect leadership performance.
- Figure 2. Effectiveness of elementary and secondary schools with experienced and relatively inexperienced principals of relationship-motivated and task-motivated leadership styles.
- Figure 3. Interpersonal effectiveness of culture trained and irrelevantly trained American leaders with relationship-motivated and task-motivated leadership styles.

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13. ABSTRACT

This paper presents a new interpretation of leadership experience and leadership training in an effort to explain why the literature reports no consistent relations between these methods of leadership development and organizational performance. The basis for the reconceptualization is derived from the Contingency Model which postulates a contingent relationship between leadership motivation as measured by the LPC score and the favorableness of the leader's situation (i.e., the degree to which the situation enables the leader to control and influence the group.) According to the model, task-motivated (low LPC) leaders perform better in favorable or unfavorable situations while relationship-motivated leaders perform better in intermediate situations. Let us now interpret leadership experience or training as improving situational favorableness by making the task more structured and by improving the leader-member relations. It then follows that the same type of training will be beneficial for one type of leader but detrimental for another. This hypothesis is tested in a variety of situations and supports the hypothesis of the Contingency Model.

14. KEY WORDS

Least Preferred Coworker score (LPC)
Contingency Model
Relationship-motivated leaders
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